



**Third Regional meeting of Local Environmental Authorities
from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan
Ala-Archa Residence, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
13 February 2006**

Summary of discussion

Introduction

The meeting assembled the ENVSEC National Focal Points from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, national experts from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and representatives from OSCE, UNEP, NATO, and UNDP. It was held back-to-back to the inception workshops of two ENVSEC projects: “Legacy of uranium extraction and environmental security in the Central Asian republics” implemented by NATO (workshop was held on 12 February 2006), and “Natural disaster preparedness and risk reduction for communities in high-risk districts in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan”, implemented by UNDP (workshop was held on 14 February 2006).

The objectives of the 3rd meeting of oblast representatives were to:

- Review the progress in the development and implementation of the ENVSEC Ferghana Valley work programme with particular focus on three projects: (i) natural disasters preparedness, (ii) REHRA (Rapid environmental and health risk assessment), and (iii) Uranium extraction and environmental security;
- Discuss the strategy for regular information exchange and communication between ENVSEC Focal Points and Programme Desk Officers;
- Discuss the project action plans for 2006.

Omor Rustembekov, ENVSEC National Focal Point from Kyrgyzstan, and Ben Slay, Director of UNDP Regional Center for Europe and the CIS were chairing the meeting. Opening remarks were delivered by Omor Rustembekov, Jerzy Skuratovic, UNDP Resident Representatives of UNDP CO in Kyrgyzstan, Markus Müller, OSCE Ambassador in Kyrgyzstan, and Makhmadsharif Khakdodov, ENVSEC National Focal Point from Tajikistan.



Opening remarks by Mr. Omor Rustembekov

Outcomes and Decisions

The discussions in particular regarded the programme coordination structure that was developed as a result of the 2nd Regional meeting of local environmental authorities in Khudjand, Tajikistan.

Progress on the two ENVSEC on-going projects was highlighted through presentations by the project leaders (Bruno Frattini, REHRA, and Peter Stegnar, NATO) with inputs from national experts. In addition, the outlines of the Ferghana Valley portal and on-line SoEs were presented.

Participants has emphasized the need for expansion and strengthening through implementation the Ferghana Valley envsec work programme, the importance of streamlining local cooperation mechanisms and facilitating access to the project information for the public and policy makers.



Discussions in the workgroups: Tajikistan (top), Kyrgyzstan (bottom)

In the same time, the lack of full and appropriate Uzbekistan's participation in the ENVSEC initiative and its regional meetings was noted with regret by the participants. In that context, the meeting has pointed out that the complexity and diversity of environmental problems in the Ferghana Valley is overwhelming even for two participating countries. A possibility of offsetting the implications of this could be to increase trans-boundary cooperation on a local level.

It was communicated that the future regional meetings will take place in the connection with concrete project meetings. As recommended by National Focal Points, the partnership will mobilize resources to expand these projects.

Recommendations of Working Groups on Coordination Strategy paper

The session on the coordination of the ENVSEC Programme in Central Asia singled out three main aspects that needed consideration; structure, means and resources, and information. These aspects are closely intertwined and overlapping, and one cannot be resolved without considering the others.

Structure

The discussions displayed that there are structures in place for the coordination of ENVSEC, but they are not fully working. There were a number of suggestions how to address this. The Kyrgyz delegation point of view was that the coordination needs to be addressed both vertically & horizontally at three levels: local, national/oblast, and national/sub-regional. Support of donors is also necessary in order to provide timely and accurate info for national decision-making.

The **Kyrgyzstan** working group further came with the following suggestions:

- Creating an office for the National Focal Point to keep close contact with project staff etc. who would provide info to the NFPs, who then channels it into parliament & decision making bodies or to the National Coordination Groups. The Coordination groups could also invite the representatives of international organisations present in the countries.
- Organise regular events to improve awareness and information dissemination to the public about ENVSEC through Aarhus Centers and web-portal
- Organisation of national-level meeting in-between the regional meetings, with participation of state agencies, both on national & local (oblast) levels
- Using existing mechanisms by utilising projects that are in implementation (ex. CARNET, Aarhus centres, other info centres within ENVSEC).

The **Tajikistan** view expressed the necessity of a clearly established and fine-tuned structure, both horizontally and vertically. Information that is collected at the national level, at the level of NCG, should be analysed by technically competent people. There are some mechanisms in place to address trans-boundary issues, but they should be taken further advantage of in the coordination of this programme. However, concretely there is a need to strengthen local level capacity coordination, as national information structures are weak. To employ efforts of structures that do not work well may be problematic.

The conclusions of the Tajikistan working group further came with the following suggestions to resolve the coordination challenge:

- On the national level, hire technical staff to a NFP, who can analyse the information collected in the field through the activities of ENVSEC and channelled to the coordination group;
- Establish quarterly meetings of this group to analyse results of ENVSEC (positive and negative);

- New ENVSEC projects should as a rule be approved by NFPs, to ensure national ownership;
- The existing web-portal www.caresd.net should be used as the information platform for ENVSEC;
- On the local level, better involvement of Aarhus Information centres as a tool for wider information dissemination to the public and to Oblast Environmental authorities. The Aarhus centres should work with local media outlets and journalists;
- On the sub-regional level, regular information reports from NFPs should be introduced. These reports will be prepared by the office of NFPs on the progress in implementation of the projects in each country and then shared with the Regional Desk Officer.

Means, Resources

The entry point for discussion with regards to the means and resources are the strict budget limitations of ENVSEC. At the same time, the National Focal Points are getting more work added to an already large workload, and financial numerations are thus desired. The workload, responsibilities, etc argues for that. Kyrgyzstan made a suggestion that the National Focal Points could be provided one or two staff through the ENVSEC Initiative to handle the information flows and liaison with Aarhus Centres. By reallocation relatively minor resources, coordination structures could potentially be improved.

Information

The ENVSEC implementation stage entails expanding pilot projects & introducing the ENVSEC to policy makers. If project results were disseminated among them, additional resources could be found to implement activities. It is a matter of coordinating information, and the type of information that is spread.

The point was made that information needs to be objective, and adapted to local needs (in order not to agitate consequences in the areas). In this regard, Aarhus Centres have a role to play, and they see their role as such:

- Support collection of information in the regions;
- Accumulate data in the centres;
- Support information & awareness campaigns for residents of hotspot areas;
- Disseminate newsletters, in local languages (Tajik, Kyrgyz, Russian). Need to ensure info is provided in a timely manner, and not exaggerated.
- Provide info through mass media, also involving the media (such as the winners of the ENVSEC-supported journalism festivals, the environmental journalists should be invited to meetings);
- Aarhus Centres should work as awareness raisers, both locally & nationally.

Next steps:

- 4th regional ENVSEC meeting for the Ferghana Valley local environmental authorities will be held tentatively in June-July 2006, in one of the Ferghana Valley countries. The Regional Desk Officer will consult with the NFPs. There was a suggestion from Tajikistan to host the next meeting) to review and discuss the progress and end results of the project on Rapid Environment and Health Risk Assessment as well as to focus on water and land resource initiatives and improved access to environmental information on local and regional levels.

Full Presentations and List of participants are available at www.envsec.org